The Last Egg

by Katy (Nolan) Cardenas

Growing up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the best time of the year other than Fall was Spring. In Spring, the grass was green, the birds were back, and school got out for Easter vacation. I'm the youngest of three girls, each of us two years apart in age. We were the Nolan Girls. We all went to Catholic school, so the Easter holiday was a big celebration at our house. It was the first holiday we could spend outside after the short, cold Winter. My sisters and I would help our dad with yard work. We knew the backyard had to be perfect for our Traditional Nolan Easter Egg Hunt. We'd pull weeds, trim the shrubs, mow the lawn and plant flowers around the tall elm tree that grew in the middle of the brick patio. My dad kept a watchful eye on us as we worked. He made sure the work was done right.

We had a large box of plastic Easter eggs we'd pull out from storage in the garage. They were every color of the rainbow and one very special golden one. My Dad and Mom filled the eggs with candies and the golden egg with money. After church on Easter morning as Mom made breakfast Dad went outside and hid all the eggs. It was always hard for us girls not to peek out the window and watch where he was hiding those eggs, but we didn't, we waited eagerly. There was such an excitement getting ready to go find all that candy waiting in the yard to be found. When he was done we'd each get a plastic bucket, stand in a line and he'd yell, "On your mark…Get set…**Go**!" We'd squeal and run all over the yard hunting for eggs until everyone of them was accounted for.

After the hunt was over, it was so much fun cracking open each egg and seeing what candy treasure was inside. My older sisters usually found the Golden Egg, but there was a year or two there when I did, and there was usually twenty dollars inside. Then, later in the week Dad would gather up all the empty eggs from our bedrooms where we kept them as trophies from the big hunt. They'd be packed away until next Spring, all ready for our Traditional Nolan Easter Egg Hunt.

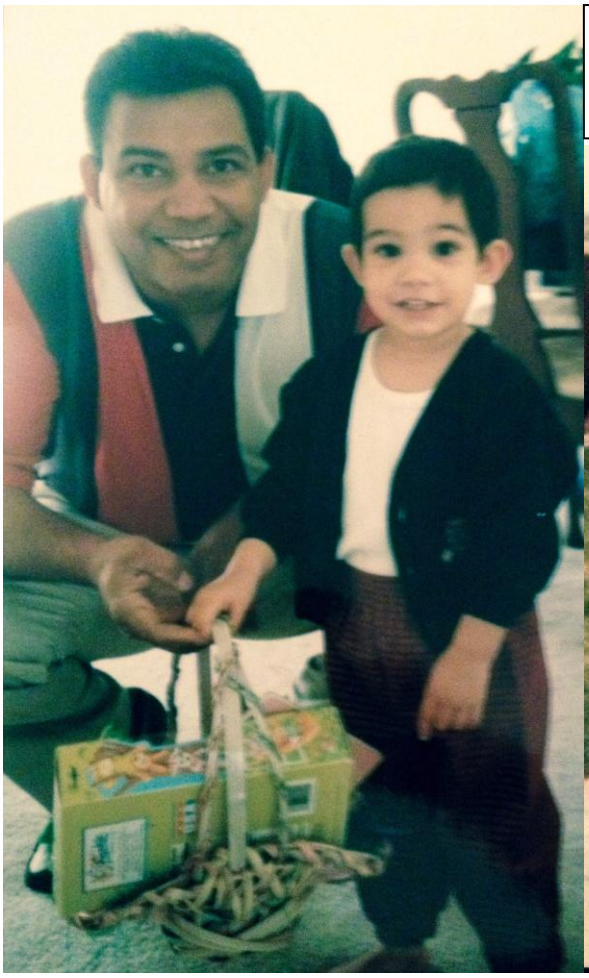
Throughout the years, my dad kept this tradition alive. Even after I moved out on my own he created the Nolan Easter Egg Hunts. I remember one Easter egg hunt in a hotel room in Taos, NM during a skiing trip when I was in

The original egg, found Oct 2017.

high school. But that time he knew he needed more than candy to get us excited about his egg hunt, so he filled all the eggs with cash. It worked and my best friend and I found every egg he hid in his room.

Years later, he created one for my little boy, his grandson. It was 1998, my son, husband, and I were at Easter Mass. When we arrived home, we saw Easter eggs all over the front yard. My dad had been there, hid a bunch of plastic eggs filled with candy and was gone. My son was four years old that year. It was wonderful to watch him experience his first Nolan Easter Egg Hunt. He got out of the car with his sippy cup and ran around the yard finding all the eggs.

We lost my dad to cancer in 2005 and I haven't thought about his fantastic egg hunts until recently. That's because I was doing the Spring yardwork. I was trimming the shrubs just like my dad taught me and I found one of the Easter eggs he hid back in 1998! The shrub had grown up around the plastic egg and my son's sippy cup! They had been encapsulated inside this shrub for nineteen years. I couldn't believe my eyes. I fell back against the house and started laughing. I think my dad would love knowing his egg hiding skills got so good that it took nineteen years to find that last egg.



The tradition continues. *(left)* Tony and Matthew Cardenas. *(below)* Beth Paiz, Mollie Baland, Katy Cardenas.